C. Remarks

The claims are 3-5 and 7, with claim 3 being independent. Claims 1, 2, and 6 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 3 has been amended to better define the claimed invention. Support for the amendment may be found, for example, at page 13, lines 8-10. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration of the present claims is expressly requested.

Claims 1, 3, and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0001744 A1 (Tsusaka). Claims 2 and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly obvious from Tsusaka in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,218,035 B1 (Fuglevand). Claims 4 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly obvious from Tsusaka in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,523,699 B2 (Akita). The grounds of rejection are respectfully traversed.

Prior to addressing the merits of rejection, Applicants would like to briefly discuss some of the features of the presently claimed invention. That invention, in pertinent part, is related to a method for producing a membrane electrode assembly for a proton-exchange membrane fuel cell, which comprises a polymer electrolyte membrane and an electrode metal catalyst layer, and at least a part of the polymer electrolyte membrane infiltrating into the electrode metal catalyst layer. According to the presently claimed production method, the electrode metal catalyst layer is coated with a composition containing at least a compound having a sulfonic group-containing monomer to form a

precursor layer of the polymer electrolyte membrane and polymerizing the composition by irradiating the precursor layer with the active energy ray. Since components for the electrolyte membrane are applied to the catalyst layer in liquid form, air and the like does not become entrapped between the catalyst layer and the electrolyte membrane. Thus, excellent contact and adhesion strength can be obtained.

Tsusaka is directed to a membrane electrode assembly and solid polymer electrolyte fuel cells. Tsusaka teaches adding a reactive metalloxane monomer both to the catalyst layer and the electrolyte membrane, and thereafter, bringing the catalyst layer and the electrolyte membrane into contact with each other for bonding. Tsusaka, however, does not disclose or suggest coating the electrode metal catalyst layer with a composition containing at least a compound having a sulfonic group-containing monomer to form a precursor layer of the polymer electrolyte membrane. Furthermore, the catalyst layer and the electrolyte membrane in Tsusaka are both solid, so that air may become trapped at their interface.

Neither Fuglevand nor Akita can cure the deficiencies of Tsusaka. As previously discussed, neither of these references is concerned with infiltration or the process of achieving it as claimed.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited documents, whether considered separately or in any combination, do not disclose or suggest all of the presently claimed elements.

Wherefore, withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and passage of the application to issue are respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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